



WAYNE DICKIESON

Farrowing time brings problems

Wayne Dickieson, Queens County Agricultural Rep. The quickest way to make your hog operation more profitable is to raise more pigs per litter to weaning age. Yet, about one out of every four pig's farrowed alive will die before weaning.

It is highly important that you be prepared before sows start farrowing, then put all available know-how to work at farrowing, and during the crucial period that follows. Pig losses are especially heavy the

first three days after farrowing.

CLEAN QUARTERS
Thoroughly clean farrowing quarters of all debris and manure. This is a very important procedure as it will cut down the passing of harmful diseases from one litter to the next. Most disinfectants do not penetrate very deep and many young pigs soon rot into material not exposed to disinfectant unless a very thorough cleaning job is done. Clean the farrowing pen as soon as possible before the sow is to farrow. If possible, wash the pens or

farrowing crates with a high pressure sprayer or steam cleaner. A lye solution of 1 pound of lye to 8 to 10 gallons of hot or boiling water can be used as a satisfactory disinfectant. There are also some "Quarinary" Ammonia products under various brand names on the market today that are quite good as disinfectants. The farrowing building should have a full cleanout if possible at least once a year. But the farrowing pens or crates should be thoroughly cleaned out between each litter.

WASH SOW THOROUGHLY
Scrub sows with warm water and soap to remove dirt that harbours disease organisms and roundworm eggs. It is important to get the extreme end of the nipple, the udder, the lower side of hind legs, and the area around the tail free of foreign matter. Spray sows to kill any lice or mange that could be picked up

by newborn pigs. Do this job two or three days before sow is due to farrow to get her accustomed to her new surroundings. Gilts may need more time to make the adjustment.

Using farrowing crates reduces the chance of crippling or crushing newborn pigs. Nearly 60 per cent of all pig losses to 8 weeks of age occur during the first 3 days after birth. The farrowing crate is something that should be considered when a sowman is building or remodeling his farrowing house. The crate used for sows is usually 7 feet long and 24 inches wide for the crate for gilts 6 to 7 feet long and 22 inches wide. They should be moveable so that they can be taken outside to wash and air. When using crates, you may want to move sows and litters to a pen after the critical days following farrowing, depending on housing facilities available.

The person who doesn't have farrowing crates in his sow barn should have his farrowing pens especially equipped for the sow when she is ready to farrow. The pen area should be approximately 40-50 sq. ft. There should be a rail put around the inside of the pen 6 - 10 inches above the floor. This will give the baby pigs a chance to get away if the sow goes to lay down. There should also be a creep area in the pen.

SUPPLEMENTAL HEAT
Supplemental heat should be supplied when pigs are farrowed cold weather periods. The quick change from the sow's body (102 degrees) to much lower external temperature is a real stress for a newborn pig. Farrowing house temperatures range from 50 degrees to 60 degrees are comfortable for sows but chilling for newborn pigs. A 250 watt heat lamp is capable of warming and drying pigs.

Heat lamps should be suspended firmly 18 - 24 inches above the floor, and adjusted upwards as pigs get larger. As pigs grow older, 125 watt lamps can be used. Other means of supplying supplemental heat are hot water pipes embedded in the floor or electric heating cables embedded in the floor.

CLEAN, DRY BEDDING
Straw, chopped straw and wood shavings are good bedding materials. All bedding should be free of mold and dust. Dry bedding is extremely important. Drafts and dampness are the worst enemies of baby pigs, because exposure to such conditions often develops into scours. This results in lower weight gains and general poor condition.

At farrowing time try to prevent pigs from chilling, dry them off, and make sure they nurse. Fetal membrane frag-

ments may have to be removed to prevent suffocation.

Clip needle teeth to prevent pigs from injuring each other and damaging the sows udder. Dip the navel in strong tincture of iodine to seal it against entrance of bacteria.

Pigs on concrete or wooden floors need supplemental iron until they are eating creep ration. Iron shots can be given in the ham muscle when pigs are 1 to 3 days old. Other sources are iron pills and powder given orally. Equalize the litter's size when there are too many pigs for a sow to care for satisfactorily. Transfer the strong pig from the litter to a smaller litter of the same age. Identify litters by ear notching for future selection of breeding stock.

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